

Message Text

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SUBJECT: IMPACT OF ASLAM KHATTAK'S DEPARTURE ON FRONTIER POLITICS

FOLLOWING RECEIVED FROM CONSUL IN PESHAWAR:

SUMMARY: DOUBTFUL THAT BHUTTO WILL BE ABLE TO FOLLOW UP HIS REMOVAL OF NWFP GOVERNOR KHATTAK BY INSTALLING PPP LEADER SHERPAO AS PROVINCIAL CHIEF MINISTER IN NEAR FUTURE. INSTEAD, SHERPAO REPORTEDLY WILL BE GIVEN PORTFOLIO IN PRESENT GANDAPUR GOVERNMENT, PAVING WAY FOR LATER EFFORT ON BHUTTO'S PART TO ELEVATE HIM TO CHIEF MINISTER. ATTEMPTS BY OPPONENTS TO BLOCK THIS MOVE WILL BE HAMPERED BY DEPARTURE OF SHREWD POLITICIAN KHATTAK. END SUMMARY.

1. IN CONSULATE'S VIEW, PRIMIN BHUTTO'S REMOVAL LAST WEEK OF ASLAM KHATTAK AS NWFP GOVERNOR NOT LIKELY TO BE FOLLOWED VERY SOON BY EFFORT ON PRMIN'S PART TO INSTALL PPP LEADER HAYAT SHERPAO AS CHIEF MINISTER IN PLACE OF INAYATULLAH GANDAPUR. WHILE BHUTTO PROBABLY STILL WANTS VERY MUCH EVENTUALLY TO MOVE SHERPAO INTO GANDAPUR'S POST, HE RECOGNIZES THAT SHERPAO DOES NOT HAVE SUFFICIENT VOTES NOW IN PROVINCIAL ASSEMBLY TO OFFER ANY

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SORT OF CHALLENGE TO CHIEF MINISTER. FURTHERMORE, ALL

AVAILABLE EVIDENCE HERE INDICATES BHUTTO NOT PREPARED AT THIS TIME TO ADOPT POLICY OF COERCION AGAINST PRO-GOVERNMENT MPAS OR USE OTHER EXTRA-LEGAL METHODS TO OBTAIN COVETED POST FOR SHERPAO.

2. TO PREPARE GROUND FOR LATER ATTEMPT TO ELEVATE SHERPAO TO CHIEF MINISTER POST, PRIMIN AND SHERPAO HAVE PERSUADED GANDAPUR TO APPOINT SHERPAO AS MEMBER OF HIS PROVINCIAL CABINET. SHERPAO EXPECTED TO BE SWORN IN AS NEW MINISTER SOMETIME DURING NEXT WEEK, INCREASING TOTAL NUMBER OF MINISTERS TO 15. IT HAS NOT YET BEEN DECIDED WHICH PORTFOLIO HE WILL BE GIVEN, BUT SHERPAO HAS BEEN DEMANDING FINANCE POST NOW HELD BY IQBAL KHAN JADUN. TO DATE, HOWEVER, JADUN, WHO IS MOST IMPORTANT MEMBER OF LARGE CONTINGENT OF MUSLIM LEAGUE MINISTERS FROM HAZARA DISTRICT, HAS BEEN ADAMANT IN REFUSING TO RELINQUISH THIS POST TO HIS LONG-TIME RIVAL. GANDAPUR HAS REPORTEDLY OFFERED TO RESOLVE PROBLEM BY GIVING SHERPAO ONE OR MORE OF HIS OWN PORTFOLIOS WHICH INCLUDE HOME, PLANNING AND DEVELOPMENT, SERVICES AND GENERAL ADMINISTRATION, CIVIL DEFENSE AND AUQAF.

3. OPPOSITION COALITION OF NATIONAL AWAMI PARTY AND JAMIAT-ULEMA-ISLAM REMAINS UNITED IN ITS DETERMINATION TO KEEP GANDAPUR IN OFFICE AND PREVENT SHERPAO'S ACCESSION TO POWER. ARBAB AIKANDER KHALIL, NAP LEADER OF THE COMBINED OPPOSITION IN THE ASSEMBLY, HAS DURING PAST FEW DAYS AGAIC GIVEN GANDAPUR ASSURANCE THAT NAP AND JUI WILL CONTINUE SUPPORT HIM AGAINST SHERPAO.

4. DEPARTURE OF ASLAM KHATTAK HAS NOT SO FAR HAD ANY IMPACT IN ALTERING NUMERICAL STRENGTH OF CONTESTING FACTIONS WITHIN RULING COALITION. IT MAY BE ASSUMED, HOWEVER, THAT IN MONTHS AHEAD GANDAPUR AND HIS ALLIES WILL GREATLY MISS THE DAY-TO-DAY LEADERSHIP PROVIDED BY KHATTAK BOTH IN ADMINISTERING GOVERNMENT AND IN DEVISING TACTICS FOR OUTMANEUVERING SHERPAO. WITH KHATTAK OUT OF OFFICE, SHERPAO SHOULD BE EXPECTED TO HAVE AN EASIER TIME GAINING ADHERENTS FROM AMONG MPAS TO HIS SMALL ASSEMBLY FACTION. HE HAS PROBLEM, HOWEVER, IN THAT HE IS NOT LIMITED OFFICIAL USE

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POPULAR POLITICIAN IN PROVINCE AND IS DISTRUSTED BY MOST OF MPAS ASSOCIATED WITH GANDAPUR. IF HE IS SUCCESSFUL IN GAINING ADHERENTS TO HIS CAUSE IT WILL LARGELY BE RESULT OF HIS ABILITY TO PROMISE AND DELIVER MORE PERMITS, LICENSES AND TIMBER CONTRACTS THAN GANDAPUR IN POSITION TO PROVIDE.

5. MEANWHILE, NAP LEADERS EXPECTANTLY AWAITING IMPENDING

RETURN OF WALI KHAN TO PROVINCE. NAP LEADERS ARE NOT
OPTIMISTIC ABOUT POSSIBILITY OF MAKING POLITICAL DEAL WITH
BHUTTO AND FORESEE ANOTHER PERIOD OF CONFRONTATION POLITICS.
SOME OF THEM BELIEVE THAT WALI KHAN MAY NOW BE PREPARED TO
DEMAND CHANGES IN CONSTITUTION ALLOWING FOR GREATER
PROVINCIAL AUTONOMY BEFORE HE WOULD BE PREPARED NEGOTIATE
SETTLEMENT WITH PRIME MINISTER.
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